

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0055] with the following amended paragraph:

[0055] When non-puncturing patterns with period $7\hat{N}/2$ ($\hat{N} = 1, 2, 3\dots$) are used, degradation in performance results. These non-puncturing patterns periods will be employed whenever the average non-puncturing period of P1 or P2 bits is within ± 1 or $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ of $7\hat{N}/2$ for even and odd \hat{N} respectively.